

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 VOE-00 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00 NSAE-00

SCA-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 SAM-01 /069 W

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R 191700Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6593

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

UNCLAS DUBLIN 521

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS, PINS, PINT, EI, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: VISAS FOR SINN FEIN/IRA MEMBERS

SUMMARY: THE ORGANIZATIONS CALLED "SINN FEIN" AND THE "IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY" APPEAR VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL AT TOP LEVELS, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY FOR LOW-RANKING MEMBERS. WE THINK, THEREFORE, THAT SINN FEIN LEADERS MUST GENERALLY BE CONSIDERED ALSO TO BE IRA DECISION-MAKERS, UNLESS THEY SPECIFICALLY DISAVOW IRA POLICIES. END SUMMARY

1. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT OFFER ANY SPECIFIC INFORMATION BEARING ON THE RECENT LOUGHRAN VISA CASE, DEPARTMENT MAY BE INTERESTED IN FOLLOWING GENERAL POINTS ON PROBLEM OF VISAS FOR SINN FEIN/ IRA MEMBERS.

2. HARD INFORMATION ON MEMBERS OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS IS, OF COURSE, DIFFICULT OF OBTAIN, FOR SIMPLE REASON THAT MEMBERS MAKE A POINT OF CONCEALING IT. IRA MEMBERS ARE JAILED HERE WHEN THEIR AFFILIATIONS CAN BE ESTABLISHED TO THE SATISFACTION OF A COURT. NORMALLY, HOWEVER, JOURNALISTS, CIVIL SERVANTS, AND EVEN PUBLIC BECOME WELL AWARE OF IMPORTANT LEADERS OF SECRET ORGANIZATIONS. SITUATION MAY BE ROUGHLY COMPARABLE TO THAT OF OLD MAFIA IN UNITED STATES, WHEN IDENTITIES OF LEADING GANGSTERS WERE WELL-
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KNOWN, EVEN THOUGH DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH IN COURT.

3. THE SITUATION IN IRELAND IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT THE IRA, THOUGH AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION, HAS A LEGAL POLITICAL WING, CALLED SINN FEIN. THE DIVISION BETWEEN MILITARY AND POLITICAL WINGS HAS A HISTORICAL BASIS, BUT TODAY IS USED LARGELY TO DISGUISE IDENTITIES OF IRA "ACTIVE DUTY VOLUNTEERS." AT THE JUNIOR LEVEL, THERE MAY BE A NUMBER OF SINN FEIN MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOTHING DIRECT TO DO WITH THE IRA. AT THE TOP LEVEL, HOWEVER, BOTH WINGS ARE THOUGHT TO TAKE THEIR INSTRUCTIONS FROM A SINGLE DECISION-MAKING BODY. THE COLLECTIVE TERM USED TO DESCRIBE BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY WINGS IS "THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT." THIS IS PURPOSELY USED TO BLUR ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SINN FEIN AND IRA.

4. SINN FEIN MEMBERS, WHEN QUERIED IN PUBLIC ABOUT THE PLANS OR ACTIONS OF THE IRA, INVARIABLY PROTECT THEMSELVES BY SAYING THAT THEY CANNOT SPEAK FOR THE IRA. HAVING SAID THIS, THEY USUALLY TURN AROUND AND DO SO. THE MORE CAUTIOUS ONES, WHICH INCLUDES ALL THE SURVIVING LEADERS, SPEAK IN AN OBLIQUE FASHION AND REFER TO THE ACTIONS OF "THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" INSTEAD OF USING THE WORDS "IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY." EVERY TEENAGER IN IRELAND UNDERSTANDS THIS. THERE IS NO ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE THE CODE BEYOND THE POINT STRICTLY NECESSARY TO PROTECT AGAINST LEGAL ACTION.

5. THE MAJOR DECISIONS OF THE "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" APPEAR TO BE TAKEN BY A FEW MEN AT THE TOP. THE EXACT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS INVOLVES SO FEW PEOPLE THAT INFORMATION IS USUALLY SUCCESSFULLY CONCEALED, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE. A SMALL GROUP CALLED "THE IRA ARMY COUNCIL" IS THOUGHT TO BE INVARIABLY INVOLVED IN IMPORTANT DECISIONS, BUT THIS IS NOT QUITE THE WHOLE STORY. JUDGING FROM A NUMBER OF REPORTS OVER THE YEARS, IT IS APPARENTLY COMMON PRACTICE TO HAVE TOP SINN FEIN OFFICERS SIT IN ON ARMY COUNCIL MEETINGS. AS A RULE, NO ONE IS AWARE WHETHER THESE MEMBERS ARE ACTUALLY ON THE COUNCIL OR WHETHER THE LEGAL FICTION THAT SINN FEIN IS A SEPARATE POLITICAL WING IS MAINTAINED EVEN IN A SMALL SECRET MEETING. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT TOP SINN FEIN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT LEAST TO THE EXTENT OF SITTING IN ON THE MEETINGS AND EXPRESSING OPINIONS.

6. IN OUR VIEW, THUS, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO DRAW ANY CLEAR, MEANING-
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FULL DISTINCTION BETWEEN SINN FEIN AND IRA LEADERS. RANK AND FILE MEMBERSHIP IS ANOTHER QUESTION.

7. WITHOUT GOING INTO VISA QUESTION IN DETAIL, THERE IS NO ROOM FOR DOUBT THAT THE IRA IS A MAJOR TERRORIST ORGANIZATION -- POSSIBLY THE MOST IMPORTANT IN WESTERN EUROPE AND ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ANYWHERE IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD. WE BELIEVE THAT ANY ACTIVE SINN FEIN LEADER MUST ALSO BE ASSUMED TO BE ONE OF THE

DECISION-MAKERS OF THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. IT IS PERFECTLY POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, THAT ANY GIVEN IRA OR SINN FEIN LEADER IS A "DOVE" WITHIN THE "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT" AND DOES NOT AGREE WITH ITS POLICY OF VIOLENCE. THIS HOWEVER, IS VERY DIFFICULT TO JUDGE. IF ANY SINN FEIN OR IRA MEMBER RESIGNS AND DISAVOWS THE "REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT," EVEN QUIETLY, THEN THERE MIGHT BE GOOD REASON TO ACCEPT THIS DISAVOWAL. SO LONG AS KNOWN LEADERS OF SINN FEIN/IRA FAIL TO REJECT THE VIOLENT POLICIES OF THEIR ORGANIZATION, HOWEVER, WE SEE NO CHOICE BUT TO HOLD THEM RESPONSIBLE.

8. THE ABOVE COMMENTS ARE INTENDED TO APPLY MAINLY TO THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEN/IRA, WHICH HAS BEEN THE MAIN GROUP RAISING MONEY IN THE U.S. FOR VIOLENCE IN IRELAND. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, TWO COMPETITIVE SINN FEIN/IRA ORGANIZATIONS WHICH SEEM TO HAVE APPROXIMATELY THE SAME STRUCTURE. ONE IS THE "OFFICIAL SINN FEIN/IRA" THE OTHER IS THE NEW "IRISH REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST PARTY" (IRSP), WHICH CLAIMS THAT IT HAS NO MILITARY WING BUT IS NEVERTHELESS INVOLVED IN A VIOLENT SHOOTING FEUD WITH THE OFFICIALS. MOORE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, VISAS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975DUBLIN00521
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750096-0817
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750337/aaaabhiq.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: WITHDRAWN <10 Jun 2003 by MorefiRH, INA>; RELEASED <16 MAR 2004 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <16 MAR 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISAS FOR SINN FEIN/IRA MEMBERS SUMMARY: THE ORGANIZATIONS CALLED "SINN FEIN" AND THE "IRISH
TAGS: CVIS, PINS, PINT, EI, UK, US, IRA, SINN FEIN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006